

Pelican Island

National Wildlife Refuge

Photo: USFWS



Photo: Paul Tritaik



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1903.
- Acres: 5,375.
- Located: Indian River County, FL.
- Officially the first refuge.
- Other management: lease with state of Florida for open waters and islands; conservation easement with water management district and mosquito control district for impoundments; management agreement with Bureau of Land Management and Indian River County for uplands.
- Location: the refuge is located in the Indian River Lagoon between the Sebastian Inlet and the Wabasso Causeway, east of Intracoastal Waterway. The nearest community is Sebastian located near the western boundary of the refuge.
- Administers Archie Carr NWR.

Financial Impacts of Refuge

- Permanent, full-time staff of six.
- Shared funding and staff with Archie Carr NWR.
- Current budget (FY 2002) of \$623,500.
- Currently no public use facilities.
- 30,000 annual visitors, by boat.

Refuge Objectives

- Protect the historic rookery on Pelican Island.
- Protect, enhance and restore marsh and lagoon habitat for migratory birds.
- Provide habitat for threatened and endangered species.
- Protect Pelican Island as a National Historic Landmark, National Wilderness Area and Wetland of International Importance.

- Increase public understanding through outreach, interpretation, environmental education and compatible recreation.

Management Tools

- Wildlife surveys and studies.
- Habitat restoration.
- Law enforcement.
- Mechanical/chemical control of exotic plants.
- Partnerships through Pelican Island Working Group.
- Volunteer activities through Pelican Island Preservation Society.
- Cooperating agreements.
- Shoreline restoration.

Public Use Opportunities

- Boat tours, kayaking, canoeing.
- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Outreach/education.

Calendar of Events

March: Pelican Island Wildlife Festival and Centennial Celebration.

Questions and Answers

Where is it?

Pelican Island is located in Indian River Lagoon east of Sebastian, Florida.

Can I see it?

You can view it two ways. From Riverview Park in Sebastian, look southeast across the open water. It is located about 1.5 miles away. The second way is by boat. Several companies in Sebastian offer excursions to the island. The cost is between \$10-\$18.

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Do you have any facilities?

At this time, no. However, facilities are under construction which will allow the public to see historic Pelican Island. The facilities will be built on the east side of the refuge off Jungle Trail through a partnership with Indian River County. Plans call for a boardwalk and observation tower overlooking Pelican Island, information kiosks, interpretive signs and restrooms to be completed by the Centennial.

Is this really the first National Wildlife Refuge?

Yes. President Theodore Roosevelt set aside Pelican Island as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds on March 14, 1903. Plume hunters, egg collectors and vandals had exterminated all the egrets, herons and spoonbills from the island in the 1800's. Paul Kroegel (first refuge manager) protected the remaining brown pelicans and petitioned ornithologists and naturalists to help him. At the urging of the Florida Audubon Society and the American Ornithologists Union, President Roosevelt acted to protect Pelican Island and subsequently many other wildlife areas that were to become the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest and most diverse assemblage of lands for wildlife.